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TO: Nursing Homes

NH - 31

FROM: Jan Eakins, Chief, Provider Regulation and Quality Improvement

VIA: Susan Schroeder, Director, Bureau of Quality Assurance

Criteria for Medication Aides in Nursing Homes

The Wisconsin Administrative Code for nursing homes, Chapter HFS 132, requires any person who administers medications to be a practitioner, nurse, or to have passed a state-approved medication course. The purpose of this memo is to communicate changes in (1) the student criteria for the state-approved medication course; (2) the requirements to maintain status as a medication aide; and, (3) the requirements for medication aides who transfer from other states.

Student Qualifications

The following are new student eligibility requirements for the state-approved medication aide courses.

The student must:

- 1) be at least 18 years of age;
- 2) have a high school diploma, High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED), or a General Education Diploma (GED);
- 3) be listed on the State of Wisconsin Nurse Aide Directory, with current Federal eligibility;
- 4) have at least 2000 hours experience in direct patient care in the past three years;
- 5) have worked a minimum of 40 hours, within the last 90 days or by the time the course clinical experience begins, caring for the same residents the student will be working with during the medication aide clinical experience;
- 6) be recommended in writing by the director of nursing and the administrator of the agency in which the student will be working during clinical experience; and
- 7) be recommended, in writing, by two licensed charge nurses, one of whom must be a registered nurse.

In order for a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) to become a medication aide, he or she must satisfactorily complete the state-approved medication aide course. A list of organizations that offer a state approved skilled nursing medication aide course is available from the Bureau of Quality Assurance. Contact Doug Englebert, RPh, Pharmacy Consultant, at (608) 266-5388.

Medication Aide Maintenance

In order for medication aides to maintain certification, they must do the following:

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- 1) maintain current status on the State of Wisconsin Nurse Aide Directory, with Federal eligibility; and
 - 2) attend four hours of inservice annually that focuses on medication and medication administration. These four hours are in addition to the mandatory 12 hours of inservice that a nurse aide must attend annually. Instructors for these inservices should have expertise in the topic areas presented.

Medication Aide Out-of-State Transfers

Medication Aides who have obtained their medication aide status in another state must meet the following requirements and pass a state-approved challenge exam.

Medication aide transfers must:

- 1) show proof of medication aide certification from another state;
- 2) show proof that the medication aide training was equivalent to the 60 hours of classroom instruction and 40 hours of practical experience required in Wisconsin;
- 3) be on the State of Wisconsin Nurse Aide Directory;
- 4) be recommended, in writing, by the director of nursing, the administrator and two charge nurses; and
- 5) pass a challenge exam with a score of 85% or better.

The challenge exam will be administered by the Wisconsin Technical College System. A medication aide from another state can take the exam up to two times, six months apart. If the medication aide does not pass the challenge exam to become a Wisconsin Medication Aide, he or she must take a state-approved medication aide course. You can contact the Bureau of Quality Assurance Pharmacist Practice Consultant, Doug Englebert, at (608) 266-5388, to request an application for the challenge exam and to request a current list of locations where the challenge exam can be taken.

During nursing home surveys, surveyors will evaluate facility compliance with medication aide requirements. Surveyors will request the names of CNAs responsible for administering medications in the facility and may contact the Voice Response Unit (VRU) to verify that a CNA is a certified medication aide. Additionally, surveyors may observe medication aides administering medications during survey task 5G – Medication Pass. If problems are identified with medication aide qualifications, a citation may be issued under Chapter HFS 132.60(5)(d). This requirement states, “In a nursing home, medication may be administered only by a nurse, a practitioner, as defined in s. 450.07(1)(d), Stats., or a person who has completed training in a drug administration course approved by the department.”

The Certified Medication Aide can be a valuable asset to your facility and your residents. The clarification and strengthening of the eligibility and certification requirements ensure high quality, consistent training of these individuals. In addition, medication aide training

distinguishes a nursing aide and offers career advancement that may help you in your staff retention efforts.

If you have any questions please contact Doug Englebert, RPh., Pharmacy Practice Consultant, Bureau of Quality Assurance, at (608) 266-5388.